



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

VALERIE ERVIN
COUNCILMEMBER
DISTRICT 5

June 12, 2009

Montgomery County Public Schools
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, MD 20850

Shirley Brandman, President, Montgomery County Public Schools Board of Education
Dr. Jerry Weast, Superintendent, Montgomery County Public Schools

Re: Piney Branch Elementary School Youth Activist Club request to install a dishwasher and discontinue the use of disposable trays and utensils

Dear Ms. Brandman and Dr. Weast:

On May 15, I met members of the Piney Branch Elementary School Young Activist Club and signed their petition to initiate a pilot project to eliminate the use of Styrofoam trays and plastic utensils by installing a dishwasher and purchasing a set of reusable trays and utensils for their school. Unfortunately this Tuesday, June 9, the Washington Post printed the article, "Early Lesson in Eco-Activism Comes from Economics Book, Kids Seek Reusable Trays: Officials Cite Cost", which reported that the school system has denied the student's request.

As a former school board member and chair of the County's Education Committee, I understand that many of our school system's management functions are most efficient when they operate homogeneously across our system. However, in this case I believe that we should allow this pilot to proceed so that we can determine whether using reusable trays and utensils can reduce our carbon footprint and waste production. To implement the pilot, the students have raised approximately \$9,000 to purchase the dishwasher and reusable trays and utensils.

If the pilot creates additional costs, I propose that any savings from the reduced purchase of disposable trays and cutlery and avoided trash collection and disposal costs go towards operating the dishwasher and cost of additional water and electricity. Any additional monies remaining after purchase of the new equipment should be used for an evaluation of the pilot and could be used for the additional costs mentioned above.

Our students identified a concern, created an action plan and raised the necessary funds to implement a solution. I believe that we should allow this pilot project to proceed this summer with an evaluation that can measure its impact on our environment. Decreasing our carbon footprint depends on innovation and who better than the next generation to identify possible solutions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Valerie Ervin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Valerie Ervin
Chair, Education Committee

- c: Larry Bowers, Chief Operating Officer, Montgomery County Public Schools
 Joseph Lavorgna, Acting Director, Division of Facilities Management,
 Montgomery County Public Schools
 Kathy Lazor, Director, Division of Food and Nutrition, Montgomery County
 Public Schools
 Bertram Generlette, Principal, Piney Branch Elementary School
 Nadine Bloch, co-facilitator, Young Activist Club
 Brenda Platt, co-facilitator, Young Activist Club
 George Leventhal, At-Large Councilmember, Montgomery County Council
 Marc Elrich, At-Large Councilmember, Montgomery County Council
 Bruce Williams, Mayor, City of Takoma Park
 Jaime Raskin, Maryland State Senator, District 20
 Sheila Hixson, Maryland State Delegate, District 20
 Tom Hucker, Maryland State Delegate, District 20
 Heather Mizeur, Maryland State Delegate, District 20
 Daniel de Vise, Staff Writer, Washington Post